DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 170 464 CE 018 799

AUTHOR McHaugh, Claire; Kasley, Helen Czachorski
TITLE Evaluating Competence: Effects of Sex, Marital Status, and Parental Status.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bias; Comparative Analysis; *Employment Qualifications; Evaluation Methods; Females; *Job Applicants; Job Skills; Males; Marital Status; *Perception; *Sex Discrimination; *Social Discrimination; Social Influences; Stereotypes; Working Parents

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the influence of a job applicant's sex, marital status, and parental status on evaluation of competence. One hundred eighty-four female and one hundred eighty-four male college studerts were given a completed job application and an article written by an applicant. The job applicant was described to the subjects in the following manner: for half of the subjects of each sex the applicant was designated as being a male and for the other half, a female; half of the applicants of each sex were described as married and half as single; half of the applicants in each of the two marital status categories were identified as having one child, and the other half as having no children; and all other information (birthdate, place of residence, educational background, and employment history) was identical for all applicants. Subjects answered eight evaluative questions concerning the competence of the applicant and the merits of the article. Females were devalued by both male and female subjects, but particularly by males. Applicants of both sexes who were married and childless were evaluated more favorably than applicants who were single and had a child. (Author/JH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED170464

Evaluating Competence: Effects of Sex, Marital Status, and Parental Status

Claire Etaugh and Helen Czachorski Kasley

Bradley University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Claire Etaugh

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE 018 799

Running head: Evaluating competence: Effects of Sex, Marital Status

Evaluating Competence: Effects of Sex,
Marital Status, and Parental Status

Abstract

368 female and male college students read a completed job application and an article written by the applicant. Both the job and the article were in non-sex-typed fields. The applicant was described as either female or male, single or married, and having one or no children. Subjects answered eight evaluative questions concerning the competence of the applicant and the merits of the article. Females were devalued by both male and female subjects, but particularly by males. Applicants of both sexes who were married and childless were evaluated more favorably than applicants who were single and had a child.

Evaluating Competence: Effects of Sex,
Marital Status, and Parental Status

A number of studies (e.g., Goldberg, 1968; Hagen & Kahn, 1975; Mischel, 1974; Pheterson, Kiesler, & Goldberg, 1971; Piacente, Penner, Hawkins, & Cohen, 1974) indicate that conditions exist in which women are judged to be less competent than equally qualified men. Further, women often are not allocated the occupational rewards or opportunities for challenging duties which they legitimately deserve (Astin & Bayer, 1972; Bayer & Astin, 1975; Levitin, Quinn, & Staines, 1971; Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; Terborg & Ilgen, 1975). Investigations of the academic reward system, for example, (Astin & Bayer, 1972; Bayer & Astin, 1975; Loeb & Ferber, 1971) reveal that women faculty generally hold lower ranks and receive lower salaries than comparable male colleagues.

Two little-investigated variables that appear to be related to such differential treatment of women and men are marital status and parental status. These factors are significant predictors of salary and rank, but they differ for women and men (Astin & Bayer, 1972; Ferber & Loeb, 1973). For example, salary is positively correlated with number of children for men, but not for women. In addition, salaries are higher for married than for single men, but higher for single than for married women. Ferber and Loeb (1973) suggest that these findings indicate that rewards are scaled to perceived financial need. Another possibility, however,

is that marital and parental status influence allocation of rewards in part through their effect on perceptions of competence. The present study examined the influence of a job applicant's sex, marital status, and parental status on evaluations of competence.

Method

The subjects were 184 female and 184 male college students enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a medium-sized, private, Midwestern university. In a preliminary study, 34 additional students were presented with six magazine articles from a variety of fields. The articles had been abridged to approximately 350 words each. No authors' names appeared. The subjects rated on a 5-point scale the degree to which the contents of each article appealed to masculine or feminine interests. An article on mail-order businesses, which received a neutral rating of 2.91, was used in the main experiment. Also in the preliminary study, 46 students were asked to rate 21 occupations on a 5-point scale ranging from very feminine to very masculine. The occupation of newspaper journalist, given a neutral rating of 3.15, was chosen for the experiment.

Subjects were told that the study concerned the prediction of job success from information contained on an employment application. Each subject received a booklet containing a job application and a sample of work (the mail-order article) of a person who supposedly had been hired recently as a newswriter for a local newspaper. For half the booklets given to

subjects of each sex, the applicant was a male and for half, a female. Half the applicants of each sex were described as married and half as single (a category including single, widowed, and divorced). Half the applicants in each of the two marital status categories were indicated as having a child, and half as having no children. All other information (birthdate, place of residence, educational background and employment history) was identical for all applicants.

After reading the application and article, the subjects answered eight evaluative questions by assigning letter grades ranging from A (superior) through F (inferior). The questions concerned the competence of the applicant (professional competence, status in the field, future job success, professional dedication) and the merits of the article (value for the reader, writing style, extent to which the reader's opinion was changed, overall grade). The author's first name was included in each question. After the evaluative questions were answered, the booklets were collected and a series of six multiple-choice questions was distributed to check whether subjects had attended to the critical (i.e. manipulated) items in the application. Only two subjects made errors and were discarded from the sample, resulting in a total N of 368.

Results

The letter grades A through F were assigned numerical values of one through five, respectively. Thus, lower scores indicate more favorable evaluations. The scores for each ques-

tion were subjected to a 2 X 2 X 2 X 2 (Sex of Subject x Sex of Applicant x Marital Status of Applicant x Parental Status of Applicant) analysis of variance. Degrees of freedom were 1, 352 for all main effects and interactions. Comparisons among means for significant interactions were made with Tukey's honestly significant difference test. (See Table 1 for means and standard deviations.)

Insert Table 1 about here

All eight questions yielded a significant main effect of sex of applicant, with males consistently receiving more favorable evaluations than females. For three of the eight questions, this was the only significant effect. Male applicants were rated more professionally competent ($\bar{X}$=2.35) than female applicants ($\bar{X}$=2.61), F=12.63, p<.001. Further, greater job success was predicted for male applicants ($\bar{X}$=2.31) than for female applicants ($\bar{X}$=2.60), F=15.73, p<.001. In addition, the male's article was judged to have more value for the reader ($\bar{X}$=2.31) than the female's article ($\bar{X}$=2.55), F=6.31, p<.012.

The other five questions yielded other significant main effects and interactions in addition to the main effect of sex of applicant. The professional status of males was judged higher ($\bar{X}$=2.60) than that of females ($\bar{X}$=2.84), F=10.59, p<.001. Married applicants received more favorable status evaluations ($\bar{X}$=2.64) than did single applicants ($\bar{X}$=2.78), F=3.58, p<.056. Female subjects gave better status ratings ($\bar{X}$=2.60) than did male subjects

($\bar{X}$=2.83), F=9.63, p<.002.

Male applicants were rated as more dedicated to the journalistic profession ($\bar{X}$=1.80) than were female applicants ($\bar{X}$=2.06), F=11.42, p<.001. This effect was due primarily to evaluations made by male subjects, as indicated by the Sex of Subject x Sex of Applicant interaction, F=3.35, p<.065. Male subjects gave more favorable ratings to male applicants ($\bar{X}$=1.71) than to female applicants ($\bar{X}$=2.11), whereas females rated the two sexes similarly. This question also produced a significant Sex of Applicant x Marital Status interaction, F=3.89, p<.047, with married males judged to be more dedicated ($\bar{X}$=1.68) than single males ($\bar{X}$=1.90), single females ($\bar{X}$=2.01), or married females ($\bar{X}$=2.10). The Sex of Subject x Parental Status interaction, F=3.35, p<.065, indicated that female subjects tended to rate applicants without children as more dedicated ($\bar{X}$=1.82) than applicants with a child ($\bar{X}$=2.07). In particular, female subjects considered childless female applicants to be more dedicated ($\bar{X}$=1.18) than females with a child ($\bar{X}$=2.22), as shown by the significant Sex of Subject x Sex of Applicant x Parental Status interaction, F=4.46, p<.033. This interaction further revealed that male subjects evaluated both males with a child ($\bar{X}$=1.76) and males without children ($\bar{X}$=1.65) more favorably than females without children ($\bar{X}$=2.20). Further, females with no children were rated as more dedicated by female subjects ($\bar{X}$=1.78) than by male subjects ($\bar{X}$=2.20).

Writing style was judged more effective for male applicants ($\bar{X}$=2.66) than for female applicants ($\bar{X}$=2.92), F=7.32,

$p<.007$. A significant Marital Status x Parental Status interaction, $F=4.06$, $p<.042$ revealed a tendency for married applicants without children ($\bar{X}=2.70$) and single applicants with a child ($\bar{X}=2.70$) to receive more favorable ratings of writing style than single applicants without children ($\bar{X}=2.90$).

Males were judged to be more influential in changing subjects' opinions ($\bar{X}=2.85$) than were females ($\bar{X}=3.05$), $F=3.71$, $p<.052$. The significant Sex of Applicant x Marital Status interaction, $F=5.99$, $p<.014$, revealed that males without children were rated as more influential ($\bar{X}=2.68$) than were either males with a child ($\bar{X}=3.02$) or females without children ($\bar{X}=3.14$).

Finally, the article received a higher grade when written by a male ($\bar{X}=2.36$) than by a female ($\bar{X}=2.71$), $F=14.46$, $p<.001$. The significant Sex of Subject x Sex of Applicant x Marital Status interaction, $F=6.74$, $p<.01$, revealed that male subjects assigned better grades to single males ($\bar{X}=2.30$) and married males ($\bar{X}=2.41$) than to single females ($\bar{X}=2.98$), whereas female subjects gave better grades to married males ($\bar{X}=2.15$) than to married females ($\bar{X}=2.63$). Further, single females received higher grades from female subjects ($\bar{X}=2.48$) than from male subjects ($\bar{X}=2.98$). The significant Marital Status x Parental Status interaction, $F=3.97$, $p<.045$), showed that married applicants without children were assigned higher grades ($\bar{X}=2.35$) then were either married applicants with a child ($\bar{X}=2.62$) or single applicants without children ($\bar{X}=2.63$). Grades assigned to single applicants with a child ($\bar{X}=2.54$) did not differ significantly from those given

to the other marital status-parental status combinations.

Discussion

The present findings suggest that the effects of sex, marital status, and parental status on reward allocation (Astin & Bayer, 1972; Ferber & Loeb, 1973) may be due in part to the influence of these variables on perceptions of competence.

In line with previous research (e.g., Goldberg, 1968; Hagan & Kahn, 1975; Mischel, 1974; Pheterson et al, 1971; Piacente et al, 1974), the competence of females was devalued. In response to all eight questions, males were judged more favorably than females regardless of marital or parental status. Further, male applicants without children were considered more dedicated (by male subjects) and more influential in changing opinions than female applicants without children. In addition, married males were judged to be more dedicated to their profession than married females.

In previous research (Hall, Watts, & Hall, Note 1; Dipboye, Arvey & Terpstra, 1977), competence of females was devalued equally by male and female raters. The present study, however, found that while females were devalued by subjects of both sexes, they were judged particularly harshly by males. Female subjects assigned a higher grade to an article written by a married male than to the same article written by a married female. Male subjects favored both single and married males over single females when grading the article. Male subjects also rated males with or without a child as more dedicated to

their profession than females with a child. In addition, males tended to consider male applicants more dedicated than female applicants regardless of marital or parental status. Such bias by males against females may be a major factor in the differential treatment of men and women in the United States work force where over 80% of managers and administrators are males (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970).

The few significant interactions involving marital status resulted in better evaluations of married applicants than single applicants. Married males were judged more dedicated than than single males. Further, married applicants without children received better ratings for writing style and higher grades on the article than did single applicants without children.

Applicants without children generally were rated higher than applicants having a child. Female subjects rated female applicants without children as more dedicated than female applicants with a child. Male applicants without children were judged to be more influential in changing opinions than males with a child, and articles written by married, childless applicants received higher grades than articles of married parents.

These findings indicate that marital status and parental status influenced perceptions of competence, but not differentially for male and female applicants. For both sexes, married and childless persons were perceived as more competent than single persons and parents, respectively. Combined with the general devaluation of females, the data indicate that married

males without children were seen as most competent, while single females with a child were considered least competent. If this pattern of results holds true for the evaluation of competence in actual work settings, these findings suggest that the increasing number of single female family heads in this country (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977) may be likely to encounter discrimination in the allocation of occupational rewards.

Reference Note

1. Hall, S. M., Watts, E., & Hall, R. C. Sex-role stereotypes and selection of women applicants for academic positions. Paper presented at the Western Psychological Association, Anaheim, California, 1973.

References

Astin, H., & Bayer, A. Sex discrimination in academe. Educational Record, Spring, 1972, 101-118.

Bayer, A. E., & Astin, H. S. Sex differentials in the academic reward system. Science, 1975, 188, 796-802.

Dipboye, R. L., Arvey, R. D., & Terpstra, D. E. Sex and physical attractiveness of raters and applicants as determinants of resume evaluations. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1977, 62, 288-294.

Ferber, M. A., & Loeb, J. W. Performance, rewards, and perceptions of sex discrimination among male and female faculty. American Journal of Sociology, 1973, 78, 995-1002.

Goldberg, P. A. Are women prejudiced against women? Transaction, 1968, 5, 28-30.

Hagan, R. L., & Kahn, A. Discrimination against competent women. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 1975, 5, 362-376.

Levitin, T., Quinn, R. P., & Staines, G. L. Sex discrimination against the American working women. American Behavioral Scientist, 1971, 15, 238-254.

Loeb, J. W., & Ferber, M. A. Sex as predictive of salary and status on a university faculty. Journal of Educational Measurement, 1971, 3, 235-244.

Mischel, H. N. Sex bias in the evaluation of professional achievements. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1974, 66, 157-166.

Pheterson, G. I., Kiesler, S. B., & Goldberg, P. A. Evaluation of the performance of women as a function of their sex, achievement, and personal history. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1971, 19, 114-118.

Piacente, B. S., Penner, L. A., Hawkins, H. L., & Cohen, S. L. Evaluation of the performance of experimenters as a function of their sex and competence. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 1974, 4, 321-329.

Rosen, B., & Jerdee, T. H. Influence of sex-role stereotypes on personnel decisions. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1974, 59, 9-14.

Terborg, J. R., & Ilgen, D. R. A theoretical approach to sex discrimination in traditionally masculine occupations. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 1975, 13, 352-376.

U. S. Bureau of the Census. 1970 Census of population. Occupational characteristics. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1970.

U. S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical abstract of the United States (98th ed.) Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1977.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for All Conditions

Female Subjects

Applicant Characteristics

Question Number		Female				Male			
		Married		Single		Married		Single	
		No Child	Child	No Child	Child	No Child	Child	No Child	Child
1	$\bar{X}$	2.52	2.52	2.44	2.52	2.22	2.39	2.35	2.48
	SD	0.51	0.59	0.90	0.79	0.74	0.58	0.83	0.79
2	$\bar{X}$	2.61	2.65	2.70	2.87	2.22	2.57	2.52	2.70
	SD	0.50	0.49	0.82	0.76	0.52	0.66	0.73	0.77
3	$\bar{X}$	2.44	2.70	2.48	2.52	2.09	2.48	2.30	2.52
	SD	0.66	0.64	0.73	0.67	0.42	0.59	0.82	0.59
4	$\bar{X}$	1.91	2.17	1.65	2.26	1.61	1.87	2.09	1.96
	SD	0.67	0.65	0.65	0.81	0.72	0.55	0.90	0.77
5	$\bar{X}$	2.26	2.70	2.57	2.30	2.04	2.30	2.44	2.61
	SD	1.01	0.97	0.84	1.06	0.98	0.88	1.20	0.66
6	$\bar{X}$	2.65	3.09	2.83	2.70	2.48	2.57	2.91	2.74
	SD	0.65	0.85	0.89	0.88	0.79	0.95	1.13	1.05
7	$\bar{X}$	3.09	3.09	2.78	2.65	2.30	2.91	2.83	3.30
	SD	0.67	0.85	1.20	0.98	0.93	0.90	1.19	0.93
8	$\bar{X}$	2.39	2.87	2.52	2.44	1.91	2.39	2.52	2.65
	SD	0.78	0.82	0.85	1.04	0.73	0.78	0.95	0.78

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Male Subjects

Applicant Characteristics

Question Number		Female				Male			
		Married		Single		Married		Single	
		No Child	Child	No Child	Child	No Child	Child	No Child	Child
1	$\bar{X}$	2.74	2.48	2.78	2.83	2.35	2.22	2.35	2.39
	SD	0.69	0.73	0.80	0.65	0.57	0.52	0.71	0.72
2	$\bar{X}$	2.91	2.87	3.04	3.00	2.65	2.70	2.78	2.65
	SD	1.00	0.55	0.88	0.60	0.71	0.47	0.67	0.65
3	$\bar{X}$	2.44	2.65	2.83	2.74	2.22	2.26	2.35	2.26
	SD	0.95	0.65	0.94	0.75	0.42	0.69	0.71	0.69
4	$\bar{X}$	2.13	2.17	2.26	1.87	1.44	1.83	1.87	1.70
	SD	0.97	0.72	1.05	0.82	0.59	0.49	0.76	0.47
5	$\bar{X}$	2.52	2.87	2.78	2.44	2.30	2.44	2.04	2.30
	SD	1.04	0.69	1.04	0.79	0.77	1.04	0.77	1.02
6	$\bar{X}$	3.04	3.13	3.00	2.91	2.61	2.70	2.87	2.44
	SD	1.07	0.97	0.91	0.95	0.78	0.77	0.97	0.79
7	$\bar{X}$	3.26	3.09	3.44	3.04	2.83	3.13	2.78	2.74
	SD	1.10	0.95	1.12	1.02	1.03	0.97	1.00	1.05
8	$\bar{X}$	2.61	2.87	3.09	2.87	2.48	2.35	2.39	2.22
	SD	0.94	0.92	1.00	0.92	0.79	0.71	0.89	0.85

Note.- Question 1: applicant's professional competence; Question 2: applicant's professional status; Question 3: prediction of job success; Question 4: applicant's dedication; Question 5: article's value; Question 6: writing style; Question 7: change in reader's opinion; Question 8: article's grade.